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TEACHING SPANISH TO NATIVE SPEAKERS OF SPANISH IN NEW MEXICO.

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A PILOT PROJECT AT PECOS, NEW MEXICO, WAS DESIGNED FOR TEACHING SPANISH AS THE MOTHER TONGUE AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE. IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PROJECT, 2 ASSUMPTIONS WERE MADE-- (1) BY DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THEIR NATIVE TONGUE, SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN WILL BE BETTER EQUIPPED TO MAKE ADEQUATE PROGRESS IN THEIR STUDY OF THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE, ENGLISH, AND (2) BY DEVELOPING LITERACY IN SPANISH, THE BILINGUAL STUDENT WILL BE BETTER PREPARED TO COPE WITH THE ENTIRE CURRICULUM. FIVE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY WERE--(1) DEVELOP THE LANGUAGE SKILLS OF UNDERSTANDING, SPEAKING, READING, AND WRITING, (2) DEVELOP APPRECIATION AND AWARENESS OF HISPANIC CULTURE, (3) BROADEN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OF INDIVIDUALS, (4) USE A PILOT CLASSROOM AS A DEMONSTRATION CENTER FOR METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING SPANISH TO SPANISH-SPEAKERS, AND (5) USE RESULTS OBTAINED TO INITIATE CURRICULUM CHANGES IN NEW MEXICO. A LANGUAGE ARTS TYPE PROGRAM, BEGINNING IN GRADE 1 AND CARRIED THROUGH GRADE 6, HAS BEEN DEVELOPED, AND TEXTBOOKS, MATERIALS, AND PROCEDURES FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS OF SPANISH ARE BEING UTILIZED. (ES)

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Teaching Spanish to Native Speakers of Spanish in New Mexico

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NEED

Inasmuch as New Mexico has a large population of Spanish-speaking children, there is an outstanding need for the teaching of Spanish to these children. We have initiated a language-arts type instruction at the elementary level because we believe that Spanish-speaking children need to develop language skills in their mother tongue if they are to become truly bilingual. Spanish-speaking children comprise approximately 30 percent of the school population in New Mexico. Although this is the estimated percentage for the State, the Spanish-speaking student population is concentrated in the small rural schools of the State. In many instances the enrollment in these schools is as high as 95 percent Spanish-speaking.

Another factor to be considered is the fact that the Spanish-speaking population is concentrated in economically depressed as well as culturally deprived areas. There is an outstanding need for the teaching of the mother tongue in the schools in order to develop positive attitudes toward hispanic culture as well as to provide society with functional bilinguals. The lack of instruction in Spanish has handicapped the full development of these children in the past and has interfered with the development of acceptable skills in English.

Since there exists a national need for bilingual and multi-lingual citizens within the national economic framework, the teaching of Spanish to students whose mother tongue is Spanish should be considered as the development of a national resource.

ASSUMPTIONS

It is believed that by developing language skills in their native tongue, Spanish-speaking children will be better equipped to make adequate progress in their study of their second language, English.

It is also assumed that by developing literacy in Spanish the bilingual student will be better prepared to cope with the entire curriculum, since he will have at his disposition two fully-developed communication mediums.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop all the language skills: understanding, speaking, reading and writing
2. Develop appreciation and awareness of hispanic culture
3. Broaden economic opportunities of individuals
4. Use pilot classroom as a demonstration center for methods and techniques of teaching Spanish to Spanish-speakers
5. Use results obtained to initiate curriculum changes in the State

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OUTCOMES

It is believed that by providing effective language instruction in the mother tongue children will be better prepared to:

1. Overcome problems created by limited experience with, and awareness of, their own language
2. Develop self-confidence and pride in their native culture and a better adjustment to the bi-cultural environment prevalent in New Mexico
3. Develop literacy in the mother tongue
4. Develop acceptance of Spanish as a communication medium for Spanish-speakers
5. Effectuate changes in the curriculum that will permit the teaching of Spanish and possibly the teaching of selected subject matter in Spanish

THE PLAN

We have developed a language arts type program beginning in grade 1 and carried through grade 6. All language skills are being developed. This is done by using textbooks, materials, and procedures developed for native speakers of Spanish.

In order to assure effective teaching and a well-organized program, a full time teacher is employed and assigned to the pilot school.

Teacher Qualifications

The teacher is a person who has been educated in the native language, Spanish.

Materials

In order to offer materials suitable for native speakers of the language, the Laidlaw Brothers series developed and used in Puerto Rico as basic texts, are being used. This is a basic series (grades 1-6) developed by Gomez Tejera, Pastor, and Guzman.
Also, teacher-prepared materials are being used. These include charts, seatwork, art work, bulletin board materials, and other teaching aids.

Methods

Standard language arts methods are being used.

PROCEDURES

First grade: expand oral fluency by using specific language activities that lead into the reading of pre-primer and primer type readers. Begin the study of Spanish letters and words.

Second grade: continue development of oral language, reading and elementary writing of letters, words, and simple sentences.

Third grade: continue development of oral language skill, reading, and continue the writing of simple sentences. Emphasize cultural awareness through children's literature.

Fourth grade: continue the development of oral skills, reading, and writing. Introduce hispanic children's literature as reading material.

Fifth grade: continue development of skills outlined. Begin comparison of cultures.

Sixth grade: continue the development of skills outlined in 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

EVALUATION

Standard methods of evaluating and reporting are being used. These are in accordance with local school policies and include the maintenance of records and reports to parents.

STATE DEPARTMENT SERVICES

The foreign languages consultant of the State Department of Education co-ordinates the program and provides supervisory and co-ordinating services to assure the effectiveness of the program.

Pecos, New Mexico

Pecos, a small community 80 miles northeast of Albuquerque on the Pecos River, is supported mainly by lumbering and farming. Its population of just over 1000 people is almost entirely "Hispano" and few of its citizens are very high on the economic ladder.

Recognizing the need for a radical departure from the standard curriculum for educating the bilingual child, the New Mexico Department of Education presented a proposal to the Ford Foundation for pilot projects for the teaching of English as a second language and the teaching of Spanish as a mother tongue. The proposal was accepted and under the Western States Small Schools Project, Pecos was selected for the pilot project on the teaching of Spanish. Mrs. Olivia Pincheira, a native of Chile, was selected to teach language arts in Spanish to all chidren in grades 1-6 at Pecos Elementary. Materials designed for the teaching of the basic skills of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing and specifically prepared for native speakers of Spanish had been selected. These, completed by teacher-prepared materials, offered the basis for an effective program.

The children at Pecos have been started on a program of literacy in Spanish. The classroom where they are taught the basic skills of literacy speaks clearly of their cultural heritage and of their mother tongue. It is a classroom like any found in Spanish-America. The teaching materials, decorations, activities, and the language is Spanish.

Athough the Spanish language arts class was limited to thirty minutes daily for each class, it was evident to the observers that something exciting and tremendously significant had been added to the curriculum at Pecos. This was instruction in the mother tongue — instruction that points to a future of functional bilingualism.

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